

What is claimed is:

[Claim 1] 1. An automotive interior component for use with an audio speaker of a vehicle, comprising:

a door trim panel;

a speaker grille mounted to said door trim panel, said speaker grille with a plurality of sound passages for transmitting sound emitted by the audio speaker; and

an electroluminescent lamp positioned between the audio speaker and said speaker grille, said electroluminescent lamp oriented for emitting visible light, when powered, through said sound passages.

[Claim 2] 2. The automotive interior component of claim 1 wherein said electroluminescent lamp includes a plurality of apertures registered with said sound passages, said apertures for transmitting sound emitted by the audio speaker.

[Claim 3] 3. The automotive interior component of claim 2 wherein said apertures are smaller in diameter than said sound passages and circumscribed by said sound passages.

[Claim 4] 4. The automotive interior component of claim 1 wherein said electroluminescent lamp is mounted to said speaker grille.

[Claim 5] 5. The automotive interior component of claim 4 wherein said electroluminescent lamp is integrally molded with said speaker grille to form a unitary assembly.

[Claim 6] 6. The automotive interior component of claim 5 wherein said speaker grille and said door trim panel comprise a unitary molded assembly.

[Claim 7] 7. The automotive interior component of claim 1 wherein said speaker grille is an integrally molded portion of said trim panel.

[Claim 8] 8. The automotive interior component of claim 1 further comprising:

an audio signal source coupled with the audio speaker; and

a controller connected between said audio signal source and said electroluminescent lamp, said controller capable of converting output signals from said audio signal source into changes in light intensity of the visible light emitted from said electroluminescent lamp.

[Claim 9] 9. A method of making an automotive interior component in a mold having a mold sections that define a mold cavity with a geometrical shape resembling at least a speaker grille and a gate for filling the mold cavity, comprising:

placing an electroluminescent lamp between the mold sections;
closing the mold sections and injecting a molten polymer resin through the gate to fill a portion of the mold cavity unfilled by the electroluminescent lamp; and

opening the mold sections after the molten polymer resin solidifies and ejecting the automotive interior component having the geometrical shape of at least the speaker grille from the mold.

[Claim 10] 10. The method of claim 9 further comprising:

shaping the automotive interior component after ejection from the mold to define a final shape of the speaker grille.

[Claim 11] 11. The method of claim 9 wherein the mold cavity further resembles a trim panel so that the ejected automotive interior component is an integral molded assembly of the speaker grille and the trim panel.